

EDITORIAL.

REAFFORESTATION OF WYRE FOREST.—Some of our readers will have seen that it is proposed to very seriously change the face of that ancient bit of forest known as Wyre Forest, and to change it in such a way as greatly to alter the fauna and flora of the district.

The proposal is (and I understand it has already been begun) to cut down in a very considerable area all the small and scrub oak, of which there is a great deal, and to plant *Conifers* instead. It will be obvious that this will greatly change the *flora* of the forest, as nothing will grow underneath the conifers, so that the existing low-growing flowers will be exterminated, and with them of course many of the insects of all orders.

A strong group of our Birmingham entomologists have worked and studied the "Wyre" insects for very many years, and we propose to publish in this journal papers dealing with all the better known and larger orders; these papers will not be mere lists of names, but it is hoped that brief biological notes may be given as well.

Mr. W. H. Edwards will undertake the Lepidoptera, Mr. Willoughby Ellis will catalogue, etc., the Coleoptera, Mr. Alfred H. Martineau has promised to be responsible for his groups of the Hymenoptera and especially the Aculeata and the *Chrysididae*, whilst Mr. C. J. Wainwright has kindly undertaken much of the *Diptera*.

All these friends know every yard of the old forest, and their work will at least record what the entomological fauna was before vandalistic hands wrought such a change as is contemplated.

We are very grateful to them for their labour of love, and we know it will be a real labour for it is an interesting and not unprolific area, and we think the papers will be of great interest to our readers.
—G. T. BETHUNE-BAKER.

A Month's Collecting in the Pyrenees.

By Wm. FASSNIDGE, M.A., F.E.S.

Auzat (Ariège), 20 kilometres by tramway from Tarascon-sur-Ariège, Midi Railway. Altitude 2,300 feet. Staff map 1 : 80,000, Foix 253, S.W. Hôtel Denjean, Hôtel Augé. Population 1,500.

In his excellent *Catalogue Raisonné des Lépidoptères des Pyrénées*, 1903, Monsieur P. Rondou is unable to give more than half-a-dozen records from the department of the Ariège, so that an apology for one more account of a visit to the Pyrenees seems to be somewhat less necessary than usual. It is hardly surprising that this part of the chain should be so little known entomologically, for the villages are not easy of access, the mountains steep and barren, and hotel accomodation, except at such centres as Ax-les-Thermes or St. Giron, not of the best. These considerations however, did not deter my friend Mr. A. E. Burras and myself from choosing deliberately the out-of-the-way village of Auzat as our entomological centre during the whole of the month of August, 1925, and though all our high hopes were not fulfilled, yet we spent a very pleasant holiday among a kindly people,
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who indeed were frankly amused by our antics, yet never for a moment forgot their native courtesy and kindness to the stranger in their midst. Only those who have travelled much in France can realise how rare it is to find a railway porter who insists that the tip you offer him is excessive, or a village inn which contains an up-to-date bathroom—or any bathroom at all, and both these phenomena we found at Auzat.

The village is situated at the meeting-place of two narrow valleys, and is dominated by the huge mass of Mt. Montcalm to the south. The slopes are very steep and rather barren, except where a tiny field has been literally built up on the mountain side. Only rough tracks lead further up the valleys and any long excursion is a toilsome business. In the gorges beside torrent and muletrack the bramble was just coming into full blossom at the beginning of August, and of course it was a great attraction to butterflies. *Dryas paphia*, L., newly emerged, was in great numbers and with it *Argynnis cydippe*, L., and its var. *cleodoxa*, Och. We had hoped to get a series of *Brenthis daphne*, Schiff., but could only find a single worn specimen of this insect at Ax-les-Thermes, when we spent a day there later in the month. The "hairstreaks" swarmed, both at bramble flowers and at the blossoms of the dwarf elder (*Sambucus ebulus*, L.), that grows plentifully by the roadside lower down the valley. *Strymon ilicis*, Esp. was the commonest species; most of the specimens being *ab. cervi*, Hb., while *S. spini*, Schiff., *S. w-album*, Knoch, and *Ruralis quercus*, L. were all common. *R. betulae*, L., we did not see until nearly the end of the month. We were very disappointed with the "blues" which were comparatively scarce, although we were informed that earlier in the season they had flown in countless numbers. Of *Scolitantides (Turanana) baton*, Berg., for example, we could only secure two specimens, a male and a female, while *Polyommatus escheri*, Hb., *P. dorylas*, Schiff. = *hylas*, Esp., *Lycaena arion*, L. and *P. thetis*, Rott. (*bellargus*, Rott.) were never really common. Of course we were some weeks late for the *Erebias* and also the season was by no means a favourable one so far as we could judge. However, we found *Erebia manto*, Esp., flying freely in the pine belt at an altitude of about 5,500 feet, most of the specimens being of the form known as race *gavarriensis*, Warren, = *caecilia*, Hb.,* quite unicolorous and with no markings either on upper or under surface. The best locality we found for this species was the mountain slope facing west some 1,000 feet above the village of Olbier, where it flew in plenty on the edge of the pine forest on a very steep slope, that made its capture difficult. Strangely enough, one specimen of this form was taken at the very end of the month flying over a meadow low in the valley at 2,400 feet, but where it came from remains a mystery. Among the *Erebias* is a specimen that has been referred to *E. medusa*, F., but as this species has not yet to my knowledge been taken in the Pyrenees, it seems possible that this single specimen is but an aberration of some other species. The *Satyrids* were most unaccountably absent from what appeared to be a very suitable locality for them. On the journey down, we saw them in plenty at Foix, where the train took an hour's rest by the way, but

* [See *Ent. Rec.* XXV. 273, 294. XXVI. 35, 105, etc.—H.J.T.]

having no net ready, and but little time, could only secure one *Satyrus hermione*, L., picked off a tree trunk during a short interval of shade. Although a fair number of *Apatura ilia*, Schiff., were seen, only three were captured, of which one was brought to us, that had been plucked off the wall of a house as it spread its wings to the rays of the declining sun, with its condition in no way improved by this summary method of capture. Among the skippers the most interesting species were *Erynnis (Carcharodus) althaeae*, Hb., of which a few were taken flying among large numbers of the commoner *E. (C.) alcaee*, Esp., and *Hesperia serratulae*, H.S., which was quite common locally on some of the higher slopes. Altogether we took or saw eighty-six species of butterflies, which compares rather unfavourably with the number seen in the Alps during the same month in preceding years.

Of Heterocera our best captures were made at light. There is at Auzat a huge electric power plant, driven by water from three lakes high up in the mountains. Consequently, the village is very well lit though nearly all the lamps are much too high for convenient working. Four lamps only were of easy access, three close together at the tiny station of the steam tramway, and one at the entrance to the factory. Night after night for a fortnight we worked these lamps to the endless amusement of the villagers, and until the moonlight caused the attraction of light to fail, we had excellent sport. During a period of intense heat that lasted five days, great numbers of winged ants came to gyrate madly round every light for a time, and finally to settle on walls and windows near, literally covering them. Never had we seen so many moths at light before, especially Lithosiids. *Oenistis quadra*, L., *Lithosia (Ilema) deplana*, Esp., *L. griseola*, Hb., *L. lurideola*, Zinck., *L. complana*, L., *L. palliatella*, Hmpn., *L. lutarella*, L., and *L. caniola*, Hb., were all present, most of them in abundance, while *Mitochondria miniata*, Forst., struck a note of colour among so many drab-hued insects. It may be that the two unusually cold and wet seasons of 1924 and 1925, were favourable to the lichen feeding species, for we found also *Bryophila muralis*, Forst., fairly common, and *B. perla*, F., in great numbers and variety, besides taking a few specimens each of *B. galatea*, Mill., which is not recorded by Rondou, and of *B. raptricula*, Hb., var. *deceptricula*, Hb. Acronictids and Notodontids were also well represented at light so far as species were concerned, but they never abounded. Perhaps the most interesting of them were *Notodonta phoebe*, Sieb., of which about ten were taken, and *Drymonia chaonia*, Hb., var. *lunula*, Grnbg., of which a few worn specimens were noted, although this must surely be a most exceptionally late date for this species.

Right through the month we sugared with praiseworthy perseverance but only moderate success. Moths were never abundant at the sugar and many species were represented by one or two specimens only. Agrotids were very disappointing and Catocalids were not attracted in any numbers. However, we took *Catocala fraxini*, L., *C. electa*, Bkh., *C. elocata*, Esp., *C. nupta*, L., *C. dilecta*, Hb., *C. promissa*, Esp., and *C. conversa*, Esp., together with several *Apopestes spectrum*, Esp., one *A. limbata*, Stgr., and one *Catephia alchymista*, Schiff. During the latter half of the month, we devoted some time each evening to searching for moths on flowers, especially on those of the hemp agrimony and of a species of mint. Many insects visited them, chiefly

Noctuae and Geometèrs, among them *Noctua margaritacea*, Vill., which usually occurs only at altitudes higher than 1,500 metres, *Miselia proxima*, Hb. (three specimens), which seems to be very rare in the Pyrenees, and *Noctua stigmatica*, Hb., which occurred in fair numbers, although only two specimens are recorded in the Catalogue of Monsieur Rondou. Plusias were found to be very scarce; the only interesting insects taken were one *Plusia gutta*, Gn., at flowers at dusk, and one *P. chryson*, Esp., kicked up by day. This last species is recorded from the Pyrenees in the Supplement, published by Monsieur Rondou in 1916.

Many long and almost wasted hours were spent in beating for larvae. Never in our experience had we worked so hard for such negligible results, so far as larvae were concerned. For my own part, I should have abandoned the attempt almost at once, had it not been that I found Hemerobiids and Chrysopids in large numbers, and had also the good fortune to beat out a specimen of *Drepanopteryx phalaenoides*, L., a Neuropteran I had never seen alive before. But of these and of the Trichoptera and Longicornia taken, some account may possibly appear in the future, nor do I propose to do more than give a list of the so-called Micro-lepidoptera observed.

The names and the order used in the following list are those of the Catalogue of Staudinger and Rebel, 1901, so that reference to Monsieur Rondou's Catalogue is thereby facilitated. I take this opportunity also of thanking Mr. Hy. J. Turner, and the entomological staff of the British Museum for their kind help in the identification of some of the insects captured.

(To be concluded.)

A Further Study of the Habits of *Acanthomyops* (*Donisthorpea*) *brunneus*, Latr., and the Myrmecophiles inhabiting its Nests.

By HORACE DONISTHORPE, F.Z.S., F.E.S., etc.

(Concluded from p. 43.)

(13) *Batrisodes delaporteï*, Aubé.—I have found this beetle in every *brunneus* nest I have examined this year; I must have seen quite 200 specimens first and last. In January I introduced a certain number of living individuals into my *brunneus* observation nest, and some (or all of them!) are alive to-day (December 20th). When the nest is uncovered and the ants all run wildly about, these little beetles put in an appearance, and trot about among the ants in a very important and consequential manner. If an ant runs into one of them by accident, and knocks it over, the beetle appears to be overcome with astonishment and chagrin at the carelessness of its host. I have never seen an ant attempt to attack, nor even to threaten these beetles, and they walk about all over the nest in perfect freedom. On December 2nd I made an observation which helps to show on what these beetles feed. Four *délaporteï* were to be seen walking about in different cells in the nest, and two of them were carrying something white in their mouths. On examination with a weak lens, the white objects proved to be young ant larvae!

35. *Ptenidium turgidum*, Th.—Several specimens occurred on October 12th in the centre of a fallen branch, which was all channelled